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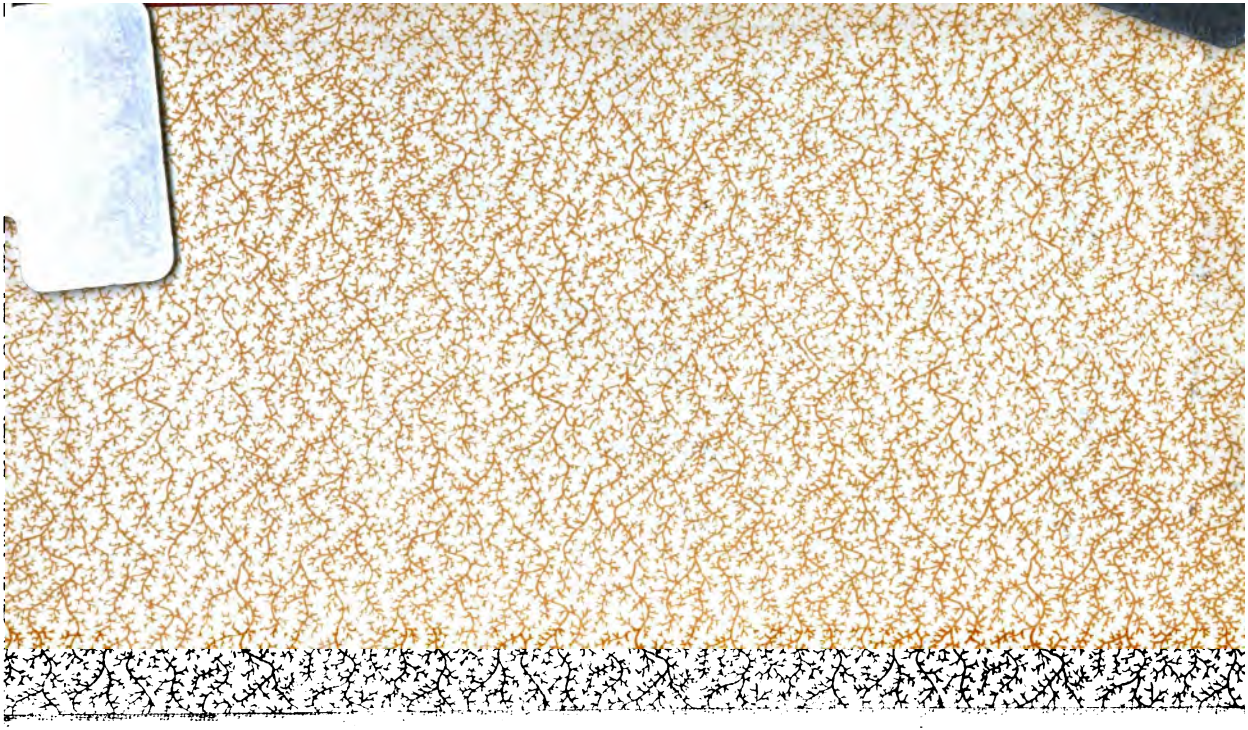

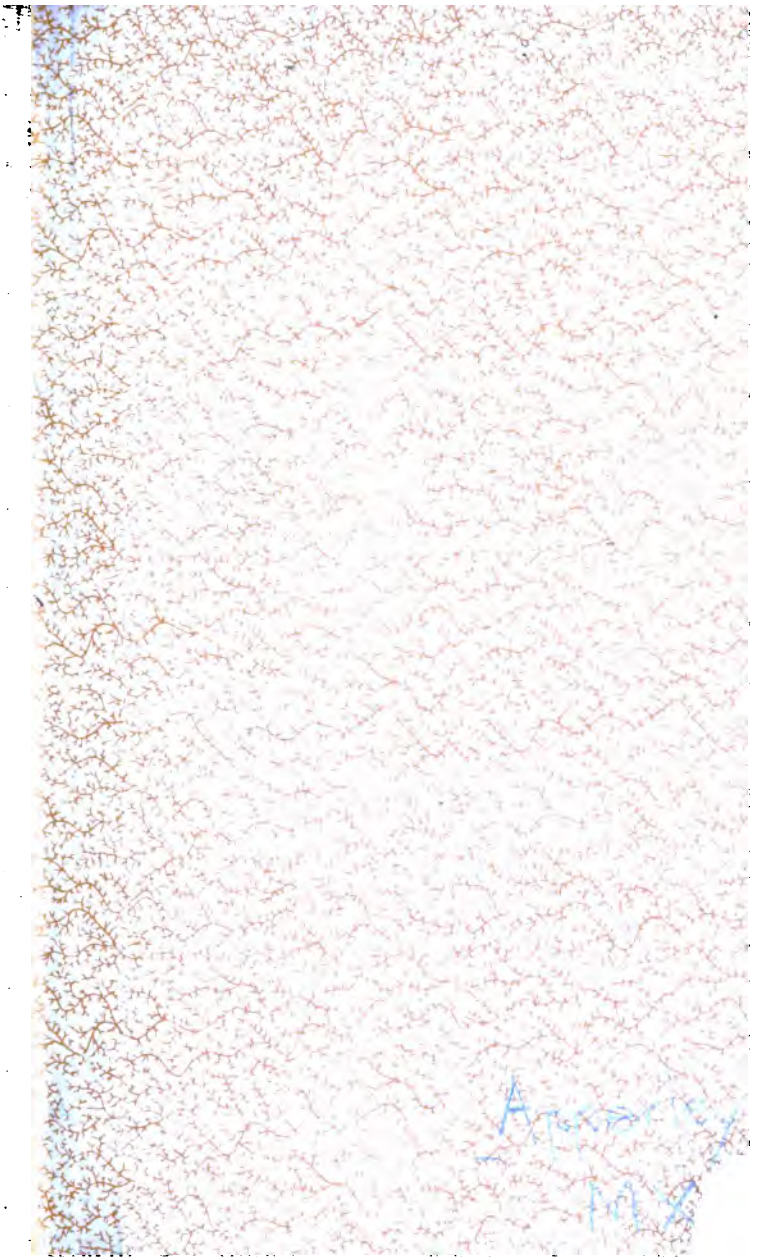

MURRAY'S READING FOR THE RAIL.

THE CHACE.

By NIMROD.

WITH WOODCUTS.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1852.
Price One Shilling.

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THE
CHACE

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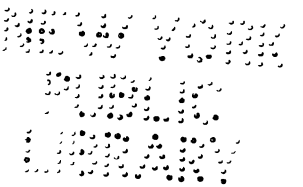

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THE CHACE.

"Listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill
Thro' the high wood echoing shrill."—MILTON.

IN various old writers, — "The Mayster of the Game," for instance —we find lively pictures of the ancient English chace, which in many respects, no doubt, was of a more noble and manly nature than that of the present day. The wolf, the bear, the boar, were among the favourite beasts of "venery;" and none can doubt that the habit of pursuing such animals, independently of giving vigour to the frame, and strength to the constitution, must have nourished that martial ardour and fearless intrepidity, which, when exerted in the field of battle, generally won the day for our gallant ancestors. The

hart, the stag, the hind, the roebuck, and the hare, are likewise constantly mentioned, as is also the wild or martin cat, now nearly extinct; but the fox does not appear to have been included in the list of the Anglo-Norman sportsman. The first public notice of this now much-esteemed animal occurs in the reign of Richard II., which unfortunate monarch gives permission, by charter, to the abbot of Peterborough to hunt the fox. In Twice's "Treatise on the Craft of Hunting," Reynard is thus classed:—

"And for to sette young hunterys in the way
To venery, I cast me fyrst to go:
Of which four bestes be, that is to say,
The hare, the herte, the wulf, and the wild boor
But there ben other bestes five of the chase;
The buck the first, the seconde is the do;
The fox the third, which hath ever hard grace
The forthe the martyn, and the last the roe."

It is indeed, quite apparent that, until at most a hundred and fifty years ago, the fox was considered an inferior animal of the chace—the stag, buck, and even hare, ranking before him. Previously to this period, he was generally taken in nets or hays, set on the outside of his earth: when he *was* hunted, it was among rocks and crags, or woods inaccessible to horsemen; such a scene, in short, or very nearly so, as we have, drawn to the life, in Dandie Dinmont's primitive *chasse* in Guy Mannering. If the reader will turn to the author of Hudibras's essay, entitled "Of the Bumpkin, or Country Squire," he will find a great deal about the hare, but not one word of the fox. What a revolution had occurred before Squire Western sat for his picture! About half-way between

these pieces appeared Somerville's poem of "The Chace," in which fox-hunting is treated of with less of detail, and much less of enthusiasm, than either stag-hunting or *hare-hunting!*

It is difficult to determine when the first regularly appointed pack of fox-hounds appeared among us. Dan Chaucer gives us the thing in *embryo*:—

> "Aha, the fox! and after him they ran;
> And eke with staves many another man.
> Ran Coll our dogge, and Talbot, and Geriond,
> And Malkin with her distaff in her hond
> Ran cow and calf, and eke the veray hogges.
> So fered were for berking of the dogges,
> And shouting of the men and women eke,
> They ronnen so, hem thought her hertes brake."

At the next stage, no doubt, neighbouring farmers kept one or two hounds each, and, on stated days, met for the purpose of destroying a fox that had been doing damage in their poultry-yards. By-and-by, a few couples of strong hounds seem to have been kept by small country esquires, or yeomen, who could afford the expense, and they joined packs. Such were called trencher hounds—implying that they ran loose about the house, and were not confined in kennel. Of their breed it would be difficult to speak at this distance of time; but it is conjectured that they resembled the large broken-haired harriers now to be met with in the mountainous parts of Wales, which, on good scenting days, are nearly a match for anything by their perseverance and nose. Slow and gradual must have been the transition to the present elaborate system; but let us wave the *minutiæ* of sporting antiquarianship.*

* In a letter, dated February, 1833, from the late Lord Arundel to the author of these papers, is the following interesting passage to sportsmen;—

In no one instance has the modern varied from the ancient system of hunting more than in the hour of meeting in the morning. With our forefathers, when the roost cock sounded his clarion, they sounded their horn; throwing off the pack so soon as they could distinguish a stile from a gate, or, in other words, so soon as they could see to ride to the hounds. Then it was that the hare was hunted to her form by the trail, and the fox to his kennel by the drag. Slow as this system would now be deemed, it was a grand treat to the real sportsman. What, in the language of the chace, is called "the tender-nosed hound," had an opportunity of displaying himself to the inexpressible delight of his master; and to the field—that is, to the sportsmen who joined in the diversion—the pleasures of the day were enhanced by the moments of anticipation produced by the drag. As the scent grew warmer, the certainty of finding was confirmed; the music of the pack increased; and, the game being up, away went the hounds "in a crash." Both trail and drag are at present but little thought of; hounds merely draw over ground most likely to hold the game they are in quest of, and thus, in a great measure, rely upon chance for coming across it; for if a challenge be

'A pack of fox-hounds were kept by my ancestor, Lord Arundel, between the years 1690 and 1700; and I have memoranda to prove that they occasionally hunted from Wardover Castle, in Wiltshire, and at Brimmer, in Hants, now Sir Edward Halse's, but then the occasional residence of Lord Arundel. These hounds were kept by my family until *about* the year 1745, when the sixth Lord Arundel died, when they were kept by his nephew, the Earl of Castle-Haven, until the death of the last Earl of that name, about the year 1782. The pack were then sold to the celebrated Hugo Meynell, Esq., of Quorndon Hall, Leicestershire; and hence it is possible they may have, in part, contributed to the establishment of that gentleman's fox-hunting fame."

heard, it can only be inferred that a fox has been on foot in the night—the scent being seldom sufficient to enable the hound to carry it up to his kennel. Advantages, however, as far as sport is concerned, attend the present hour of meeting in the field. Independently of the misery of riding many miles in the dark, which sportsmen of the early part of the last century were obliged to do, the game, when it is now aroused, is in a better state to encounter the great speed of modern hounds, having had time to digest the food which it has partaken of in the night, previously to its being stirred. But it is only since the great increase of hares and foxes that the aid of the trail and drag could be dispensed with, without the frequent recurrence of blank days, which now seldom happen.

Compared with the luxurious ease with which the modern sportsman is conveyed to the field—either lolling in his chaise-and-four, or galloping along at the rate of twenty miles an hour on a hundred-guinea hack—the situation of his predecessor was all but distressing. In proportion to the distance he had to ride by starlight were his hours of rest broken in upon; and, exclusive of the time which that operation might consume, another serious one was to be provided for—this was, the filling his hair with powder and pomatum until it could hold no more, and forming it into a well-turned knot, or club, as it was called, by his valet, which cost commonly a good hour's work. The protectingmud-boot, the cantering hack, the second horse in the field, were luxuries unknown to him; and his

well-soiled buckskins, and brown-topped boots, would have cut an indifferent figure in the presence of a modern connoisseur by a Leicestershire cover-side. Notwithstanding all this, however, we are inclined strongly to suspect that, out of a given number of gentlemen taking the field with hounds, the proportion of really scientific sportsmen may have been in favour of the olden times.

In the horse called *the hunter*, a still greater change has taken place. The half-bred horse of the early part of the last century was, when highly broken to his work, a delightful animal to ride; in many respects more accomplished, as a hunter, than the generality of those of the present day. When in his best form, he was a truly-shaped and powerful animal, possessing prodigious strength, with a fine commanding frame, considerable length of neck, a slight curve in his crest, which was always high and firm, and the head beautifully put on. Possessing these advantages, in addition to the very great pains taken with his mouth in the bitting, and an excellent education in the school or at the bar, he was what is termed a complete snaffle-bridle horse, and a standing as well as a flying leaper. Held well in hand—his rider standing up in the stirrups, holding him fast by the head, making the best of, and being able, from the comparatively slow rate at which hounds then travelled, to pick or choose his ground—such a horse would continue a chace of some hours' duration at the pace he was called upon to go, taking his fences well and safely to the last; and he would frequently command the then large sum

of one hundred guineas. But all these accomplishments would never have enabled a horse of this description to carry the modern sportsman, who rides well up to hounds, on a good scenting day, over one of our best hunting countries. His strength would be exhausted before he had gone ten minutes, by the increased pace at which he would now be called upon to travel, but to which his breeding would be quite unequal; and his true symmetry, his perfect fencing, his fine mouth, and all his other *points*, would prove of very little avail. If ridden close to the hounds, he would be powerless and dangerous before he had gone across half a dozen Leicestershire enclosures.

The increased pace of hounds, and that of the horses that follow them, have an intimate connection with each other, if not with the march of intellect. Were not the hounds of our day to go so fast as they do, they would not be able to keep clear of the crowd of riders who are now mounted on horses nearly equal to the racing pace. On the other hand, as the speed of hounds has so much increased, unless their followers ride speedy, and, for the most part, thorough-bred horses, they cannot see out a run of any continuance if the scent lies well. True it is that, at the present time, every Leicestershire hunter is not thorough-bred; but what is termed the cock-tail, or half-bred horse of this day, is a very different animal from that of a hundred years back. In those days, a cross between the thorough-bred, or perhaps *not quite thorough-bred*, horse, and the common draught-mare, was considered good enough to produce hunters equal

to the speed of the hounds then used. There was not such an abundance of what may be termed the intermediate variety of the horse in the country—"pretty well-bred on each side the head"—which has of late years been in demand for the fast coaches of England, in which low-bred horses have no chance to live. Mares of *this* variety, put to thorough-bred stallions, *and their produce crossed with pure blood,* create the sort of animal that comes *now* under the denomination of the half-bred English hunter, or cock-tail. These are also the horses which contend for our several valuable stakes, made for horses not thorough-bred, though, when brought to the post, they are sometimes so much like race-horses in their appearance and their pace, that it would be difficult to detect the blot in their pedigree. A prejudice long existed against thorough-bred horses for the field, particularly such as had once been trained to the course; and in some quarters it still lingers. It is argued by their opponents that the thinness of their skins makes them afraid of rough black-thorn fences, and that they lose their speed in soft, or what, in sporting language, is termed deep ground; also, that having been accustomed from their infancy to the jockey's hand, they lean upon their bits, as when in a race, and are therefore unpleasant to ride. Such of them as have been long in training may undoubtedly be subject to these objections, and never become good and pleasant hunters; but when purchased young, and possessing strength and bone, they must have many counterbalancing advantages over the inferior-bred horse.

So far from not making good leapers, the firmness of bone and muscle peculiar to this variety of the breed is prodigiously in favour of that desirable qualification. Indeed, it has been truly said of them, that they can often leap large fences when lower bred horses cannot leap smaller ones,—the result of their superior wind when put to a quick pace.

Whoever wishes to see two distinct species of the horse in the most perfect state, should go to Newmarket and Melton-Mowbray—to the former for the race-horse, to the latter for the hunter. In no place upon the earth is *condition* attended to with so much care, or managed with such skill, as in this renowned metropolis of the fox-hunting world. Indeed, we conceive it would be useless to expect horses to live with hounds in such a country as Leicestershire, unless they were in condition to enable them to contend for a plate.

Melton-Mowbray generally contains from two to three hundred hunters, in the hands of the most experienced grooms England can produce—the average number being ten to each sportsman residing there, although some of those who ride heavy, and rejoice in long purses, have from fourteen to twenty for their own use; the stud of the Earl of Plymouth for many years exceeded the last-mentioned number. It may seem strange, that one man should, under any circumstances, need so large a number of horses solely for his personal use in the field; and it must be admitted that few countries do require it. In Leicestershire, however, the universal practice is for each sportsman

to have at least two hunters in the field on the same day,—a practice found to be economical, as it is from exhaustion, the effect of long-continued severe work, that the health of horses is most injured. And when it is also borne in mind, that hounds are to be reached from Melton, Leicester, &c., every day in the week,—that one horse out of six in every man's stud is, upon an average, lame, or otherwise unfit for work,—and that a horse should always have five days' rest after a moderate, and at least seven or eight after a severe, run with hounds,—it will not seem suprising that ten or twelve hunters should be deemed an indispensable stud for a regular Leicestershire sportsman.

The stables and other conveniences for hunters in the town and neighbourhood are upon a very superior scale, and the greater part of the studs remain there all the year round; though, from the comparatively small quantity of arable land in the county of Leicester, and the very great demand for forage, oats and hay are always considerably dearer here than at any other place in England. The sum-total of expenses attending a stud of twelve hunters at Melton, including every outgoing, is, as nearly as can be estimated, one thousand pounds per annum. In all stables, the average outlay for the purchase of horses is great,—at least two hundred guineas each hunter; and, in some, the annual amount of wear and tear of horse-flesh is considerable.

At no distant date—within at most thirty years—Melton-Mowbray was an insignificant-looking little town. It is prettily situated in a rich vale, through

which the river Stoure passes, but had nothing an artist would have called a *feature* about it, except its beautiful church. But of late it has put on a very different appearance, owing to the numbers of comfortable houses which have been erected for the accommodation of its sporting visitors, who now spend not less, on an average, than fifty thousand pounds per annum on the spot. It stands on one of the great north roads, eighteen miles from Nottingham, and fifteen from Leicester; which latter place is also become a favourite resort of sportsmen, as it is well situated for the best part of the Quorn, and Lord Lonsdale's countries, and many of the favourite covers of the Atherstone (lately better known as Lord Anson's) country, can be reached from it.

The following description of the Old Club at Melton-Mowbray, so called in contradistinction to the New Club, some time since broken up, is given in one of Nimrod's letters in the "Old Sporting Magazine," about ten years back:—

"The grand feature at Melton-Mowbray is the Old Club, which has been established about thirty-eight years, and owes its birth to the following circumstances:—Those distinguished sportsmen, the late Lord Forrester and Lord Delamere (then Messrs. Forrester and Cholmondeley), had been living for some years at Loughborough for the purpose of hunting with Mr. Meynell, and removed thence into Melton, where they took a house, and were joined by the late Mr. Smythe Owen, of Condover Hall, Shropshire. As this house, now known as the Old

Club House, only contains four best bed-rooms, its members are restricted to that number. But the following sportsmen have, at different periods, belonged to the club:—The Hon. George Germaine; Lords Alvanley and Brudenel; the Hon. Joshua Vanneck, now Lord Huntingfield; the Hon. Berkeley Craven; the late Sir Robert Leighton; the late Mr. Meyler; Messrs. Brommell, Vansittart, Thomas Aysheton Smith, Lindow, Langston, Maxse, Maher, Moore, Sir James Musgrave, and the present Lord Forrester—the four last-mentioned gentlemen forming the present club. There is something highly respectable in everything connected with the Melton Old Club. Not only is some of the best society in England to be met with in their circle, but the members have been remarkable for living together on terms of the strictest harmony and friendship; and a sort of veneration has been paid by them to the recollection of the former members, as the following anecdotes will prove:—The same plate is now in use which was purchased when the club was established (for there are none of the '*certamina divitiarum*,'—no ostentatious displays at the table of the Old Club, though everything is as good, of its kind, as a first-rate cook can produce, and the wines are of the best quality), and even trifles are regarded with a scrupulous observance. A small print of the late Samuel Chiffney, on 'Baronet,'* was placed against the wall by the Hon. George Germaine, so distinguished

* Baronet was a celebrated racer, belonging to George the Fourth, when Prince of Wales.

as a most excellent sportsman, as well as a rider over a country or a race-course—in the latter accomplishment perhaps scarcely excelled by any gentleman jockey; and although, since it was first affixed, the room has undergone more than one papering and repairing, yet the same print, in the same frame, and *on the same nail*, still hangs in the same place.

> 'The rivets were not found that joined us first,
> That do not reach us yet;—we were so mixed,
> We were one mass, we could not give or take
> But from the same, for he was I—I he.'"

There have lately sprung up two junior clubs at Melton. The one called the New Club, occupying the house formerly the residence of Lord Alvanley, opposite that excellent inn called the George Hotel, is composed of the following eminent sportsmen:—Mr. Errington, the master of the hounds; Count Matuchevitch, Mr. Massey Stanley, and Mr. Lyne Stevens. The other, at the house of the late Sir Harry Goodricke, is known as "Lord Rokeby's Club," and consists of Lords Rokeby and Eglinton, Sir Frederick Johnson, and Mr. Little Gilmour. The uninitiated reader would, perhaps, be surprised by an enumeration of the persons of rank, wealth, and fashion, who, during months of every year, resign the comforts and elegancies of their family mansions for a small house in some town or village of Leicestershire—to the eye of any one but a sportsman, nearly the ugliest county in England. Amongst these devotees to fox-hunting are the following:—The Earl of Wilton and his countess, in the town of Melton, at the house formerly occupied by the Earl

of Darlington, to which he has greatly added, having purchased it: it is, perhaps, the most complete and splendid hunting-box at this time in England. At Little Poulton, the Earl of Darlington and family; at Leicester, Sir John Key and his lady; at Sowerby, Mr. and Mrs. John Villiers; at Quorndon, Mr. Farnham; and at the Hall, late Mr. Meynell's, Mr. Angerstein; at Ratcliffe, Captain Oliver and his lady; at Oakham, Mr. Curwin; at Lowesby, the Marquis of Waterford; at Barleythorpe, Mr. Bevan; at North Stoke, Mr. Turner; at the Lodge, near to Melton, the residence of the late Earl of Plymouth, are domiciled, in the season, Sir David and Lady Anne Baird; and nearer the town, the following well-known sportsmen:—Mr. John Ewart, with his family, in the house formerly Lord Kinnaird's; Count Bathyany, *per se;* and in various hotels and lodgings are to be found, Lords Archibald Seymour, Macdonald, and Howth; Messrs. White, Spiers, Wharton, Rochford, Harvey Aston, Doyne, William Coke, John Campbell (of Saddel), Charles Lambe, &c.

Nor can any foreigner visiting this country, and a sportsman in his own, fail to be greatly surprised at the magnificence of our hunting establishments, whose sole object is the fox. The kennels and stable at Quorndon Hall, celebrated as the residence of "the great Mr. Meynell," and subsequently, until within the last few years, of every proprietor of the Quorndon or Quorn hounds, are especially worthy his attention. The former are perhaps the most extensive at the present day in England; among the

latter is one holding twenty-eight horses, so arranged, that when a spectator stands in the centre of it, his eye commands each individual animal; and being furnished with seats, and lighted by powerful lamps, forms a high treat to the eye of a sportsman on a winter's evening; in addition to this, there are several loose boxes and an exercise ride, as it is called, under cover, for bad weather. The usual amount of the Quorn establishment has been forty efficient hunters, and from sixty to one hundred couples of hounds. Mr. Osbaldeston, however, during his occupation of the country, had a still larger kennel—and no wonder, for it was his custom to turn out every day in the week, weather permitting; and, after Christmas, as the days increased in length, he had often two packs out on the same day—a circumstance before unheard of. This gentleman, however, is insatiable in his passion for the chace; and when we think what fatigue he must have been inured to whilst hunting his own hounds six days a week, in such a county as Leicestershire, for a succession of seasons, we read with less surprise his late Herculean feat of riding fifty four-mile heats over Newmarket heath, in the short space of eight hours, and in the face of most tempestuous weather!

Four packs of fox-hounds divide this far-famed county of Leicester: namely, Mr. Forester's, late the Duke of Rutland's; the Earl of Lonsdale's; the Atherstone, late the Earl of Lichfield's, afterwards Sir John Gerard's, but now Mr. Applewaite's; and what were so long called the Quorn, now Mr. Errington's,

but lately Sir Harry Goodricke's, who built a kennel for them at Thrussington, half way between Melton and Leicester, which situation is more in the centre of the country than Quorn, where they had previously been kept for the period of Mr. Meynell's hunting. The county of Leicester, however, does not of itself find room for all these packs: parts of Rutlandshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and Warwickshire, are also included in their beat.

Our readers are doubtless aware that such portion of a country as is hunted by any one pack of hounds is technically called their *country;* and of all the *countries* in the world, the Quorn certainly bears the bell. This superiority arises from the peculiar nature of the soil, which, being for the most part good, is highly favourable to scent; the immense proportion of grazing land in comparison with that which is ploughed; and the great size of the enclosures, many of which run to from sixty to one hundred acres each. The rarity of large woods in this part of Leicestershire is also a great recommendation to it as a hunting country; while it abounds in furze-brakes, or gorse-covers, as they are termed, for the rent of which a considerable annual sum (nearly one thousand pounds) is paid to the owners. Independently of these, what are termed artificial covers are made with stakes, set at a certain height from the ground for the grass to grow over them; but they are very inferior to the others, being difficult for hounds to draw. The subscription to the Quorn hounds has varied from two thousand to four thousand pounds per

annum;* but Sir Harry Goodricke bore the whole expense of them himself.

One of the most striking features in the aspect of the chosen regions of English fox-hunting is the formidable *ox-fence*, rendered necessary by the difficulty of keeping fatting cattle within their pastures, during the season of the œstrus, or gad fly. It consists of—first, a wide ditch, then a sturdy black-thorn hedge, and at least two yards beyond that a strong rail, about four feet high: to clear all these obstacles, from whichever side they may be approached, is evidently a great exertion for a horse. What is termed the bulfinch-fence (still more common in these districts) is a quickset hedge of perhaps fifty years' growth, with a ditch on one side or the other, and so high and strong that horses cannot clear it. The sportsman, however, charging this at nearly full speed, succeeds in getting to the other side, when the bushes close after him and his horse, and there is no more appearance of their transit than if a bird had hopped through. Horses, unaccustomed to these fences, seldom face them well at first; perhaps nothing short of the emulation which animates their riders, and the courage created in the noble animals themselves by the presence of the hounds, would induce them to face such things at all. Timber-fences, such as rails, stiles, and gates, but particularly rails, are oftener leaped in Leicestershire than in any other country, by reason of the great height which the quickset fences attain—a height which, in some places,

* Sir Bellingham Graham alone received the last-named sum. That now given to Mr. Errington is about two thousand five hundred pounds.

nothing but a bird can surmount: brooks also abound, amongst the widest of which are the Whissendine; the Smite, or Belvoir; one under Stanton Wood; another under Norton by Galby; and a fifth near Woodwell Head.

At the conclusion of the last century, Mr. Meynell was master of these Quorn hounds, since which time they have been in the hands of the following conspicuous sportsmen:—Earl Sefton, the late Lord Foley, Mr. Thomas Aysheton Smith, Sir Bellingham Graham, Mr. Osbaldeston, Lord Southampton, the late Sir Harry Goodricke, Sir Francis Holyoake Goodricke, and Mr. Errington, the second son of Sir Thomas Stanley, Bart., of Cheshire, who now has them.

The town of Melton furnishes an interesting scene on each hunting morning. At rather an early hour are to be seen groups of hunters, the finest in the world, setting out in different directions to meet different packs of hounds. Each sportsman sends forward two. On one is mounted a very light but extremely well-dressed lad, who returns home on his master's cover hack, or in the dickey of his carriage, if he has happened to be carried to cover in the more luxurious fashion. On the other hunter is a personage of a very different description. This is what is called the "second-horse man;" he rides the second horse, which is to carry his master with the hounds after his having had one, or part of one, chace on the first. This description of servant is by no means easy to procure; and he generally exhibits in his countenance and demeanour something like a modest assurance that he possesses

qualities of importance. In short, he must have some brains in his head; be a good horseman, with a light hand; be able to ride very well to hounds; and, above all, he must have a good eye to, and a thorough knowledge of, a country, to enable him to give his master a chance of changing his horse in a run, and not merely when it is over. Lord Sefton brought this second-horse system into fashion at the time he hunted Leicestershire, when Jack Raven, a light weight, and son of his huntsman, the celebrated John Raven, huntsman to the still more celebrated Mr. Meynell, used to ride one of his thousand-guinea hunters in his wake—if we may so express ourselves—in the field, to which he changed his seat at the first convenient opportunity. The system, however, has been improved upon since then. The second-horse man now rides to points, instead of following the hounds, and thus often meets his master at a most favourable moment, when his good steed is sinking, with one that has not been out of a trot. There is much humanity as well as comfort in this arrangement; for at the pace hounds now go over grass countries, horses become somewhat distressed under heavy weights in a short time after the chace begins, when the scent lies well, and they are manfully ridden up to the pack.

About an hour and a half after the servants are gone forward with the hunters, a change of scene is to be observed at Melton. Carriages and four appear at some doors; at others very clever, and, most commonly, thorough-bred hacks, led gently in hand, ready for their owners to mount. The by-roads of this country

being bad for wheels, the hack is often the better conveyance of the two—always, indeed, unless the fixture be at a place on, or not far from, a turnpike-road; and twelve or fourteen miles are generally performed by him within the hour.

The *style* of your Meltonian fox-hunter has long distinguished him above his brethren of what he calls the *provincial* chace. When turned out of the hands of his valet, he presents the very *beau-ideal* of his *caste*. The exact Stultz-like fit of his coat, his superlatively well-cleaned leather breeches and boots, and the generally apparent high breeding of the man, can seldom be matched elsewhere; and the most cautious sceptic on such points would satisfy himself of this fact at one single inspection.

Before Leicestershire acquired its present ascendant rank in the scale of sport, it was hunted by what were called the Noel hounds, which afterwards became the property of the Lonsdale family; but, in those early days, this county wore, to the eye of a sportsman, a very different appearance from that which it now presents. A great portion of the land was unenclosed; neither was there a tenth part of the furze-covers with which it now abounds. The foxes, on the other hand, were wilder then than they are at present, and runs of longer duration than those of later times were, on an average, the result. Game was not so plentiful as it now is; consequently foxes had further to travel for their usual provender, which trained them for runs of extraordinary length; and they were wilder, from the wilder nature of the country in

which they were bred. It was, however, reserved to Mr. Meynell to render famous the county of Leicester as a hunting country. He was, doubtless, the most successful sportsman of his own time, nor has he been surpassed by any who have trodden in his steps; although it may be admitted he has had his equals in some departments of "the craft." It is a great mistake to fancy that a fool will ever make a first-rate figure even in fox-hunting; and, in truth, this father of the modern chace was anything but a fool. He was a man of strong and vigorous mind, joined with much perseverance, as well as ardour in his favourite pursuit, and bringing faculties to bear upon sport, as a *science*, which would have distinguished themselves in any walk of life to which he might have applied them. As a breeder of hounds he displayed a perfect judgment: the first qualities he looked for were fine noses and stout running; a combination of strength with beauty, and steadiness with high mettle. His idea of perfection of shape was summed up in "short backs, open bosoms, straight legs, and compact feet." Although he did not hunt his hounds himself, yet he was one of the boldest, as well as most judicious horsemen of his time; but this was only a minor qualification. His knowledge of hunting was supreme, and several of his maxims are in force to the present hour. He was a great advocate for not hurrying hounds in their work; and having, perhaps, unparalleled influence over his field, he was enabled to prevent his brother sportsmen from pressing on the hounds when in difficulties—himself being

the first to keep aloof: in chace, no man rode harder.

It was in his day that the hard riding, or, we should rather say, quick riding, to hounds, which has ever since been practised, was first brought into vogue. The late Mr. Childe, of Kinlet Hall, Shropshire—a sportsman of the highest order, and a great personal friend of Mr. Meynell—is said to have first set the example, and it was quickly followed by the leading characters of the Quorn hunt.* This system has not only continued, but has gained ground; and the art of riding a chace may be said to have arrived at a state of perfection quite unknown at any other period of time. That a drawback from sport, and occasional loss of foxes, are often the results of this dashing method of riding to hounds, every sportsman must acknowledge; as an old writer on hunting has observed, "The emulation of leading, in dogs and their masters, has been the ruin of many a good cry." One circumstance, however, has greatly tended to perfect the system of riding well up, and this is the improved condition of hunters.† Of Mr. Meynell's

* Among the foremost of these were, the present Earl of Jersey, then Lord Villiers; the late Lord Forester, then Mr. Cecil Forester; Lord Delamere, then Mr. Cholmondeley; the Honourable George Germaine; Earl Sefton Lord Huntingfield, then the Honourable Joshua Vanneck; the late Lords Charles Somerset, Maynard, and Craven; Lord Lynedoch, then Colonel Graham; the late Lords Foley and Wenlock (then Sir Robert Lawley); Honourables Robert Grosvenor, Berkely, Craven, and Martin Hawke; Sir John Shelley, Sir Henry Peyton, and the late Sir Stephen Glynn; General Tarleton; Messrs. Loraine Smith, Childe, Charles Meynell, Harvey Aston, Lowth, Musters, Lambton, Bennet, Hawkes, Lockley, Thomas Aysheton Smith, Lindow, Jacob Wardell, *cum multis aliis*.

† The advantages of the new system of preparing the hunter for the field have been so clearly demonstrated by the author of these papers, in his Letters on the Condition of Hunters, Riding to Hounds &c., that the old

time, two celebrated chaces are recorded in print: one of an hour and twenty minutes without a check; and the other, two hours and fifty minutes without a cast. Only two horses carried their riders throughout the first run, and only one went to the end of the second; both foxes were killed, and *every hound* was present at the death of each. We may venture to say, had the two runs we have alluded to taken place within the last few years, this superiority in the condition of the hounds over the horses would by no means have been maintained.

We wish we could gratify such of our readers as are sportsmen with the date and origin of our best packs of fox-hounds, as well as the names and character of their owners; but our limits will not allow us to go into much detail. Perhaps the oldest fox-hound blood in England at this time is to be found in the kennel of the Earl of Lonsdale, at Cottesmore. The Noels, whom this family succeeded, were of ancient standing in the chace; and the venerable peer himself has now superintended the pack for nearly fifty years, with a short interregnum of three or four years, when Sir Gilbert Heathcote had them.

Lord Yarborough's kennel can likewise boast of very old blood, that pack having descended, without interruption, from father to son for upwards of one hundred and fifty years.

The hounds, late Mr. Warde's, sold to Mr. Horlock a few years since for two thousand guineas, claim a

one, of turning him to grass in the summer, and destroying that condition which it had taken months to procure, is nearly, if not totally, exploded in the studs of all the hard riders of the present day.

high descent, having much of the blood of Lord Thanet's and Mr. Elwes's packs, which were in the possession of the Abingdon family, at Rycot, for at least three generations, and hunted Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

Mr. Warde was a master of fox-hounds during, as we believe, the yet unequalled period of fifty-seven years in succession. During this time he sold his pack to Lord Spencer; but reserved three couples of bitches, from which he raised another pack, and thus never lost sight of his old blood.

The late Earl Fitzwilliam comes very near Mr. Warde as an old master of fox-hounds. Soon after Mr. Warde purchased his first pack of the Honourable Captain Bertie, this peer bought the one called the Crewe and Foley, which had been very long established in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire; and he kept them to his death—nearly fifty years, and they are now in the kennel of the present Earl.

The Belvoir hounds are also a very old established pack, but had an interval during the minority of the present Duke of Rutland, when in the hands, first, of Sir Carnaby Haggerstone, and afterwards of Mr. Percival, brother of the late Lord Egmont.

The Duke of Beaufort's are another justly celebrated pack, now in possession of the third generation; they date from the time of Lord Fitzwilliam's taking the Crewe and Foley hounds, which made an opening in that part of Oxfordshire which the Duke now hunts.

Fox-hounds have been kept at Raby Castle, Durham, by the present Duke of Cleveland and his uncle, the

late Duke, for more than a century; and his Grace officiated as huntsman to his pack for nearly forty seasons, still following them to the field.

The Earl of Scarborough's late pack, now Mr. Foljambe's, hunting the Collingworth country, claims also an early date; and among the other old masters of fox-hounds now alive, the names of Sir Richard Puleston, the late Lord Middleton, the Earl of Harewood, Mr. Villebois, Mr. Ralph Lambton, Mr. Musters, and the Duke of Grafton, stand next on the list. The late Sir Thomas Mostyn was in the uninterrupted possession of fox-hounds for upwards of forty years; the late Mr. Chute, of Hampshire, kept them at least thirty years; and that super-excellent sportsman, Mr. Musters, has already seen out a similar period.

With the exception of these and a few others, the packs of English fox-hounds have changed masters so often within the last fifty years, that it is almost impossible to trace them, either in blood or possession. However, the most valuable kennels of the present day are those of the Dukes of Rutland, Beaufort, and Cleveland, Lord Fitzwilliam, Messrs. Ralph Lambton and Osbaldeston (now Mr. Harvey Combe's). Mr. Warde has been remarkable for the great bone, size, and power of the hounds he has bred. With the exception of the Duke of Cleveland's and Mr. Villebois's *large* packs (so called in contradistinction to packs consisting of their smaller hounds, which these eminent sportsmen bring into the field on the alternate days), no hounds of the present day equal

his in this respect. His logic on the subject is incontrovertible. "You may at pleasure," says this distinguished sportsman, "diminish the size and power of the animal you wish to breed; but it is difficult to increase, or even preserve them, adhering to the same breed." Many thought that Mr. Warde's hounds looked to some disadvantage, owing to their generally carrying a good deal of flesh, which, however, he considered—as did also the celebrated Tom Rose, the Duke of Grafton's late huntsman, and father of the present—absolutely essential to those which, like his, hunted strong woodland countries. To the eye of a sportsman, it is certain they always afforded a high treat, as the power and fine symmetry of the fox-hound were apparent at first sight; and almost every kennel in the south of England, and several in the north, are now proud to acknowledge their obligations to the blood of John Warde—*the Father of the Field.*

The following sketch of honest Old Tom is copied from a late number of the "Northampton Herald," with a few additional particulars by the friend who has kindly forwarded it to us, and who had long known him, and was able to appreciate his character. It is but an imperfect sketch, he observes, and hardly does Old Tom justice:—

"Poor Tom has at length gone to the place where all things are forgotten. For many years have I known him well, and safely can I aver that a more honest and worthy man never sat on a saddle, or ever cheered a hound. He had been from his infancy in the family of the Duke of Grafton. It is related of

him, that Joe Smith, who had the care of the old Duke's hounds, whilst hunting one day at Staen, near Brackley, heard a boy hallooing crows, and was so pleased with his voice, that he took him into the stable. Be that as it may, he hunted the Grafton pack for nearly half a century. As it is much easier to pick a hole than mend one, so many, who were unacquainted with the nature of the country, used ofttimes to be not very scrupulous in their remarks as to his management. No one knew what hounds ought to be, better than Tom; but, as he frequently used to say, 'a man must breed his pack to suit his country.' His hounds were supposed to be wild, and to have too much fly in them; or, according to his phrase, '*a leetle in a hurry.*' They certainly were so in a degree; but, in the ungovernable woodlands he had to hunt, how many foxes would he have caught had he not lifted them and thrown them in at head, with a bad fox? One fox would have lasted him a season. This system, doubtless, would make them wild in the open, but in a woodland country what other system is to be pursued? Knowing that they had a good deal of fling in them, Tom could not bear the sight of a red coat. The Pytchley wild-boys, who were ever for a scurry in the morning, used to indulge Tom with their company whenever they met in the open, and not being accustomed (when at home) to give them 'much room,' used to drive them over it most unmercifully, and generally soon lost their first fox for them. As soon, however, as Tom's company had left him, or he had left them, by slipping down-wind with

a few farmers and a field he could controul, no hounds would sooner settle to their scent, or make more of it. If the scent would let them, none could twist him up sooner. Tom had one failing (and who has not ?), which was, that he was too strongly prejudiced in favour of his own sort, and thereby lost the advantage which is derived from judiciously crossing, and which has so mainly contributed to the improvement of hounds in the present day. He had generally many lame hounds, which arose, not from any fault of his, but from the dampness of the kennel, in which there arose upright springs; which (whatever may be the case now) were not cured in his time. Though not an elegant, he was a capital horseman, and no one got better to his hounds. He did not like either a difficult or a raw horse, and he was not what is called a bruising rider; but he well knew the pace his horse was going, and always kept something in him. He did not like cramming him at large fences; but, like his inimitable pupil, Charles King, would always let any aspiring rider break the binders for him, and would rather get his horse's hind legs into the middle of a fence and make him creep through it, than let him jump.

"He had a sharp eye for a gap, or the weakest place in a fence, and could bore a hole through a black, dark double hedge better than most men. In the latter part of his life, he had a propensity highly disagreeable to a horseman's eye: he used to poke his horse on the head till he frightened him out of his senses, held him too hard, and frequently made him jump short, either before or behind. The consequence

was, he often spoilt his beauty in a scramble, or lay on his back, as the penalty of his cowardice. However, he got well to his hounds without upsetting his horse; and when he was with them he knew well when to stir them, and when to let them alone.

"Some five-and-thirty years ago, no pack was better appointed. The horses came chiefly from the racing stud, and all the men were well mounted. Dick Forster* and Ned Allen, then both in high feather, were of the first order of the profession (*Jackett*, too, was a famous assistant, and a fine rider), quick, active, and light, and always ready to play into one another's hands. As many a flower blows unseen, so had these hounds many a fine day's sport that was hardly ever heard of. With no one out but '*Old Beau*,' with his low-crowned hat, black top-boots, one steel spur; his groom, Luke, in his twilled fustian frock, on the second horse; and a few old potterers like myself,—I have seen many a run, the recollection of which warms the expiring embers of my old age. Tom had a fine voice, which he, however, never used unnecessarily; and he scarcely ever blew his horn, except to get them out of a cover when the fox was away. As long as fox-hunting is followed by Englishmen, so long will the name of Old Tom Rose be cherished with the fondest recollections."

Sir Richard Puleston is celebrated as a judicious breeder of hounds, and his blood has likewise been highly valued in several of our best kennels, amongst which is the Duke of Cleveland's, to whom Sir Richard

* Now huntsman to Mr. Villebois, in Hampshire.

sold a very large draft some years since, and also that of the Fife. The late Mr. Corbet, a very considerable breeder of hounds, always bowed to his superior judgment in this department of the science. The most celebrated *breeders*, however, of this day, are the Dukes of Rutland and Beaufort, and Mr. Ralph Lambton; and Mr. Osbaldeston's blood, although himself no longer the owner of hounds, is *de facto* in the highest repute in the hunting world. A few years back, he had nearly forty couples of hounds at work at one time, by one sire—his Furrier.

The following testimony to the character of the late Duke of Beaufort, and his fox-hounds, appeared in a late number of the New Sporting Magazine, from the pen of Nimrod:—

"Yet it is as a master of fox-hounds, that it is within my province to speak of the late Duke of Beaufort; and, from the many years' experience I had of his Grace in the field, I feel myself in some measure competent to the task. I need scarcely say I was always an admirer of his hounds, although I could not like his country. The gradual improvement I saw in the former, in defiance of all the disadvantages of the latter, convinced me that there was a system at work highly worthy of my consideration—a directing hand *somewhere* which must eventually lead to perfection. But whence this directing hand I was for a long time unable to discover. I doubted it being that of the Duke, not from a mistrust of his capacity, but because I had reason to believe the numerous avocations of his station prevented his attending to the minutiæ of

a kennel;—although I did not consider his Grace a sportsman of the *very first class*, in which his hounds certainly stood. I doubted it being that of Philip Payne, his huntsman, for, to appearance, a duller bit of clay was never moulded by Nature. But we should not judge from appearances, and I lived to confess my error. There was about Philip a steady observance of *circumstances*, which, increasing with the experience of their results, was more useful to him, as a breeder of fox-hounds, than the learning and talent of a Porson. His observation alone taught him, that in seeking to produce excellence in animals, we have the best prospect of success in the election of those to breed from which have individually exhibited the peculiar qualities we require from them. Having availed ourselves of those in a kennel, a combination of strength and symmetry—which we call beauty—produces the perfect hound; at least as nearly so as the somewhat imperfect law of nature will allow of."

Persons, who are not sportsmen, may be at a loss to estimate the annual expenses of a pack of fox-hounds, hunting our first rate countries; and, perhaps, equally so to account for such large sums being expended in such pursuits.*

Hay and oats, and, consequently, oatmeal, being very much cheaper now than they were during the war-prices, of course these expenses are diminished: but, even at present, we understand that, in the best establishments, very little is left out of four thousand

* The following are the items of expenses, laid down by Colonel Cooke, in his "Observations on Fox-hunting," published a few years since. The

pounds at the end of the year, when all contingent charges are liquidated; and we have reason to know that several greatly outstrip even this sum, perhaps to the extent of one-half in addition. The late Sir Harry Goodricke had eighty couples of hounds in his kennel, and forty-four hunters in his stables; and we believe that his predecessors, Lord Southampton, Mr. Osbaldeston, and Sir Bellingham Graham, even exceeded this measure of establishment.

The price of hounds is, perhaps, not generally known. Thirty years ago, Sir Richard Puleston sold his to the Duke of Bedford for seven hundred, and, fifteen years since, Mr. Corbet's were sold to Lord Middleton for twelve hundred guineas. A well-known good pack will, in these times, command a thousand guineas;—those of Lord Tavistock (the Oakley), to Sir Harry Goodricke; Mr. Nicholl's, to the Earl of Kintore; and Sir Richard Sutton's to Mr. Thomas

calculation supposes a four-times-a-week country; but it is generally below the mark:—

Fourteen horses	£700
Hounds' food, for fifty couples	275
Firing	50
Taxes	120
Two whippers-in, and feeder	210
Earth-stopping	80
Saddlery	100
Farriery, shoeing, and medicine	100
Young hounds purchased, and expenses at walks	100
Casualties	200
Huntsman's wages and his horses	300
	£2235

Of course, countries vary much in expense from local circumstances such as the necessity for change of kennels, hounds sleeping out, &c., &c. In those which are called hollow countries, consequently abounding in earths, the expense of earth-stopping is heavy; and Northamptonshire is of this class. In others, a great part of the foxes are what is termed stub-bred (bred above ground), which circumstance reduces the amount of this time.

Aysheton Smith, have been sold for that sum within the last few years; and those of Mr. Warde, as we have already said, for double that sum. But a very few years back, indeed, Mr. Osbaldeston sold *ten couples* of hounds for the first-named sum to the late Lord Middleton; and we have reason to believe he had hounds in his kennel for which he would not have taken two hundred guineas a-piece. Knowing all this, one can make every allowance for the angry feeling and fears of their owners when they see the chance of their being ridden over and destroyed in chace. Good hounds are not easily replaced; and it is on this account, that in the hard-riding countries, and where the covers are small, seldom more than sixteen or seventeen couples form a pack.

The recent retirement of the Duke of Rutland from the field has been felt to leave a vacuum in the hunting world. Those hounds are now in the possession of a very popular young nobleman, Lord Forester, and his Grace subscribes one thousand two hundred pounds per annum towards their support; but the Duke himself no longer hunts, neither is there the annual assemblage of sportsmen that was wont to be within the walls of Belvoir Castle. These are circumstances which have caused much regret; for his Grace retires with the good name of all the fox-hunting population. He "did the thing" with princely magnificence, both in-doors and out; and if materials had been sought for to furnish a faithful representation of the style and grandeur of the genuine English nobleman, giving a fair part of his attention to the arrangements of the

chace, we have reason to believe they would have all been met with at Belvoir.

Although most foreigners express vast surprise that we should go to such expense in hunting the fox, unattended by the parade of the continental *chasse*, yet several of them have of late been induced to make their appearance in Leicestershire; and some few have shown that, had they been born Englishmen, and rightly initiated in the art, they must have been conspicuous characters in the field. The performances of Count Sandore, an Hungarian nobleman, who resided one year at Melton-Mowbray, on a visit to Lord Alvanley, have already met the public eye; and his daring horsemanship, and consequent mishaps, formed the subject of an amusing tale. From a ludicrous description given of them by himself, a series of pictures were painted by Mr. Ferneley, of Melton-Mowbray, representing him in as extraordinary and perilous situations as the imagination of man could have conceived. Fiction, however, was not resorted to, every scene being a real one; and the Count—the delight of the Meltonians—carried them to his own country, on his return, together with some English mares to produce hunters, having had a good taste of the breed. He was mounted by Mr. Tilbury, a celebrated horse-dealer in London, who found him a stud of eight horses for the season, for the moderate sum of one thousand pounds, including every contingent expense, even to the turnpike gates. Count Bathyany is a resident at Melton; Counts Hahn and Bassewitz, from Germany, spent part of one season there; and

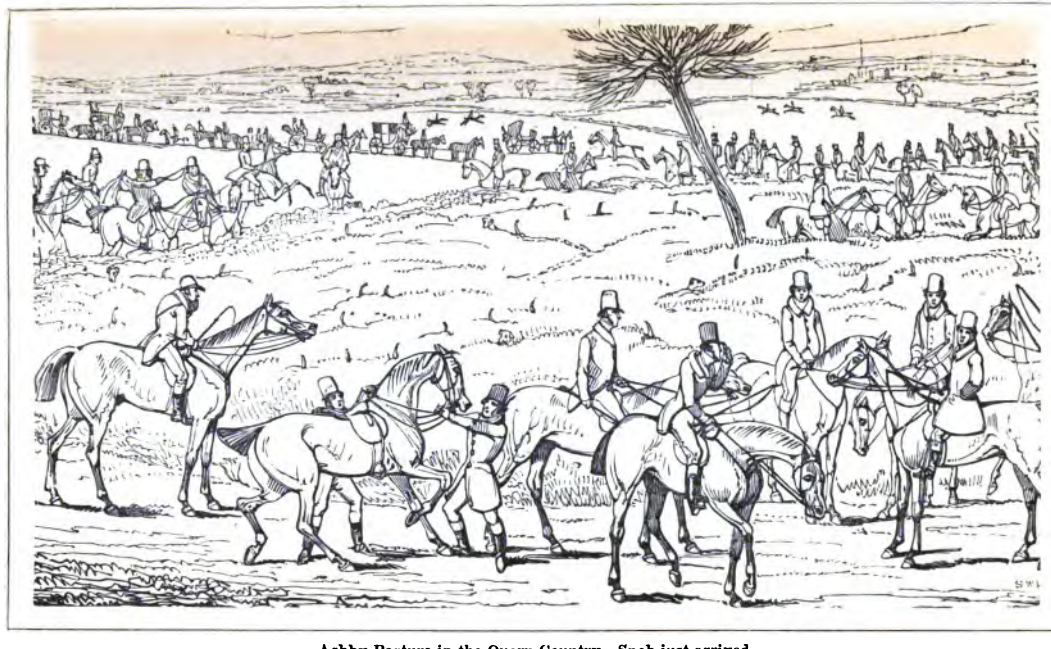
Count Matuchevitch, the Russian minister, is residing there now. His Excellency has ten hunters of his own, rides hard, and is much esteemed by the Meltonians, and all sportsmen in the neighbourhood.* During the visit of Don Miguel to the Duke of Wellington at Strathfieldsay, a few years back, he went out with the Vine hounds (late Mr. Chute's), to which his Grace is a subscriber. He rode a celebrated hunter of the late King's, and gallantly did he put him along. It too often happens, however, on such occasions, when sport is most anxiously desired for the amusement of some distinguished individual, that the game runs short, or the scent lies faintly. Such was a good deal the case in this instance, although there was running enough to show that Miguel would have stopped at nothing that might have come in his way to oppose his being with the hounds. Of his qualities as a sportsman there was little opportunity of judging, but he certainly showed himself to be a horseman of a superior caste: insomuch that those who observed him were little astonished with the accounts of his personal activity

* Several French sportsmen have lately visited Leicestershire; the best performer of them, perhaps, is M. Normandie. M. de Vaublan and M. d' Hinnisdale have both had a taste of Melton; and, in 1834, the last-named gentleman spent the winter at Leamington, in Warwickshire. This was the year in which M. Vaublan was in Leicestershire, where, although very indifferently mounted by Tilbury, and experiencing many falls, he was almost always to be seen at the finish of a good run. At all events, he went as long as his horse could go, and was considered a very good horseman. M. de Normandie has hunted much, both in Leicestershire, Warwickshire, and Dorsetshire, being at this time domiciled at Catestock, in the latter county, the head quarters of Mr. Farquharson's hunt, with three thorough-bred young ones in his stud,—namely, Ciudad, Rouncival, and Rodrigo,—which no doubt will soon become perfect *in his hands*, for no man need have better.

in the first weeks after his return to Portugal:—he, at that crisis, is said to have ridden six hundred miles in six successive days; a feat which those who have travelled on Portuguese roads will appreciate. So much for, we fear, one of the last persons to whom anybody would think of applying Wordsworth's eulogium on "the Shepherd Lord:"

> "In him the savage virtue of the chace,
> Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts, were dead."

It is a hackneyed enough remark, that both ancient and modern writers make sad work of it when they attempt a description of heaven. To describe a run with fox-hounds is not a much easier task; but to make the attempt with any other county than Leicestershire in our eye, would be giving a chance away. Let us then suppose ourselves to have been at Ashby Pasture, in the Quorn country, with Mr. Osbaldeston's hounds, in the year 1826, when that pack was at the height of its well-merited celebrity. Let us also indulge ourselves with a fine morning in the first week of February, and at least two hundred well-mounted men by the cover's side. Time being called—say a quarter past eleven, nearly our great-grandfathers' dinner-hour—the hounds approach the furze-brake, or the gorse, as it is called in that region. "*Hark in, hark!*" with a slight cheer, and perhaps one wave of his cap, says Mr. Osbaldeston, who long hunted his own pack, and in an instant he has not a hound at his horse's heels. In a very short time the gorse appears shaken in various parts of the cover—apparently from an unknown cause, not a single hound being for



Ashby Pasture in the Quorn Country—Snob just arrived.

some minutes visible. Presently one or two appear, leaping over some old furze which they cannot push through, and exhibit to the field their glossy skins and spotted sides. "Oh you beauties!" exclaims some old Meltonian, rapturously fond of the sport. Two minutes more elapse; another hound slips out of cover, and takes a short turn outside, with his nose to the ground and his stern lashing his side—thinking, no doubt, he might touch on a drag, should Reynard have been abroad in the night. Hounds have no business to *think*, *thinks* the second whipper-in, who observes him; but one crack of his whip, with "Rasselas, Rasselas, where are you going, Rasselas? *Get to cover, Rasselas!*" and Rasselas immediately disappears. Five minutes more pass away. "No fox here," says one; "Don't be in a hurry," crie Mr. Cradock; * "they are drawing it beautifully, and there is rare lying in it." These words are scarcely uttered, when the cover shakes more than ever. Every stem appears alive, and it reminds us of a corn-field waving in the wind. In two minutes the sterns of some more hounds are seen "flourishing" † above the gorse. "*Have at him there,*" holloas the Squire ‡—the gorse still more alive, and hounds leaping over each other's backs. "*Have at him there*

* This gentleman resided within the limits of the Quorn hunt, and kindly superintended the management of the covers. He has lately paid the debt of nature.

† Technical, for the motion of a hound's stern or tail, when he first feels a scent, but is not sufficiently confident to *own*, or *acknowledge* it.

‡ When Mr. Osbaldeston had the Quorn hounds, three of the four packs which hunted in the same county with his own, were the property of noblemen; so, for the sake of distinction, his friends conferred on him the familiar title of "the Squire."

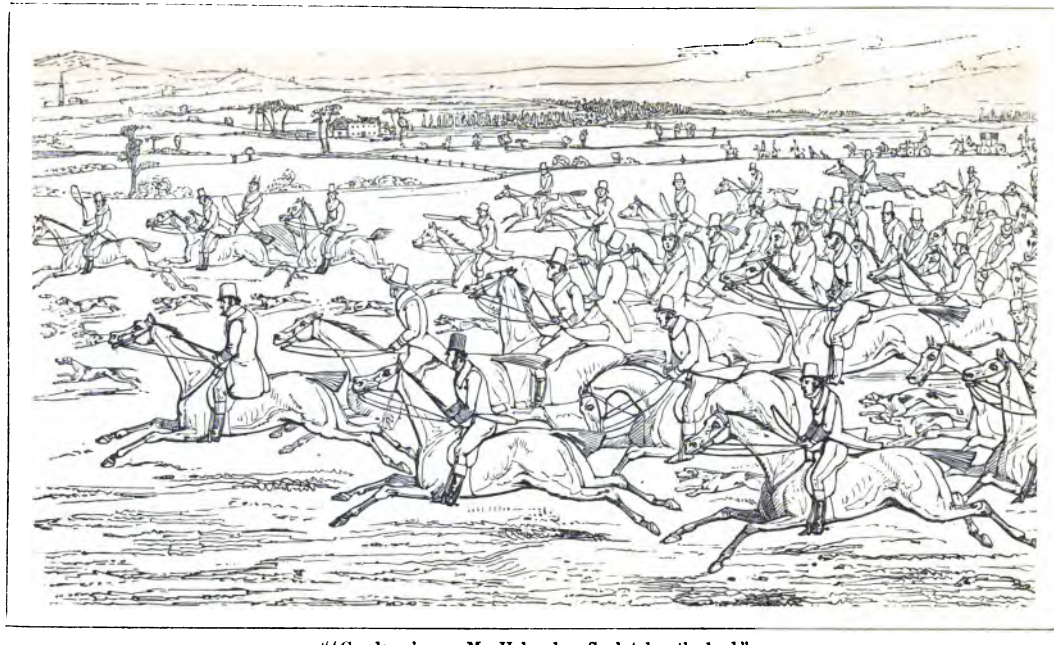
again, my good hounds; a fox for a hundred!" reiterates the Squire; putting his finger in his ear, and uttering a scream which, not being set to music, we cannot give here. Jack Stevens (the first whipper-in) looks at his watch. At this moment "John White," "Val. Maher," "Frank Holyoake" (who will pardon us for giving them their *noms-de-chasse**), and two or three more of the fast ones, are seen creeping gently on towards a point at which they think it probable he may break. "Hold hard, there," says a sportsman; but he might as well speak to the winds. "Stand still, gentlemen! *pray* stand still," exclaims the huntsman; he might as well say so to the sun. During the time we have been speaking of, all the field have been awake—gloves put on—cigars thrown away—the bridle-reins gathered well up into the hand, and hats pushed down upon the brow.

At this interesting period, a Snob,† just arrived from a very *rural* country, and unknown to any one, but determined to witness the start, gets into a conspicuous situation: "Come away, Sir!" holloas the master (little suspecting that the Snob may be nothing less than one of the Quarterly Reviewers‡). "What mischief are you doing there? Do you think *you* can catch the fox?" A breathless silence

* John White, Esq., of Park Hall, Derbyshire; Valentine Maher, Esq., a member of the Old Club; and Francis Lyttleton Holyoake, Esq., of Studley Castle, Worcestershire, but now Sir Francis Holyoake Goodricke, having succeeded to the title and estates of the late Sir Harry Goodricke.

† We know nothing of the derivation of the word "Snob," unless it be in contra-distinction to *Nob;* it is certainly not a classical one, but either that or *Tiger* is too often applied to a total stranger who ventures to show himself in the "swell countries," as they are called.

‡ This essay originally appeared in the "Quarterly Review.



"'Go along,' roars Mr. Holyoake—Snob takes the lead."

ensues. At length a whimper is heard in the cover—like the voice of a dog in a dream: it is Flourisher,* and the Squire cheers him to the echo. In an instant a hound challenges—and another—and another. 'Tis enough. "*Tallyho!*" cries a countryman in a tree. "He's gone," exclaims Lord Alvanley: and, clapping his spurs to his horse, in an instant is in the front rank.

As all good sportsmen would say, "'Ware, hounds!" cries Sir Harry Goodricke. "Give them time," exclaims Mr. John Moore. "That's right," says Mr. Osbaldeston, "spoil your own sport as usual." "*Go along,*" roars out Mr. Holyoake, "there are three couple of hounds on the scent." "That's your sort," says Billy Coke,† coming up at the rate of thirty miles an hour on Advance, with a label pinned on his back, "*he kicks:*"—"the rest are all coming, and there's a rare scent to-day, I'm sure." Bonaparte's Old Guard, in its best days, would not have stopped such men as these, so long as life remained in them.

Only those who have witnessed it can know in what an extraordinary manner hounds that are left behind in a cover make their way through a crowd, and get up to the leading ones of the pack, which have been fortunate in getting away with their fox. It is true, they possess the speed of a race-horse; still nothing short of their high mettle could induce them to thread their way through a body of horsemen going the best

* A noted finder, now in Mr. Osbaldeston's pack.

† Nephew to Mr. Coke, of Holkham; his famous horse Advance was dangerous in a crowd, and hence the necessity of a label.

pace, with the prospect of being ridden over and maimed at every stride they take. But, as Beckford observes, "'Tis the dash of the fox-hound which distinguishes him." A turn, however, in their favour, or a momentary loss of scent in the few hounds that have shot ahead—an occurrence to be looked for on such occasions—joins head and tail together, and the scent being good, every hound settles to his fox; the pace gradually improves; *vires acquirit eundo; a terrible burst is the result!*

At the end of nineteen minutes the hounds come to a fault, and for a moment the fox has a chance—in fact, they have been pressed upon by the horses, and have rather over-run the scent. "What a pity!" says one. "What a shame!" cries another; alluding, perhaps, to a young one, who would and could have gone still faster. "You may thank yourselves for this," exclaims Osbaldeston, well up at the time, Ashton* looking fresh; but only fourteen men of the two hundred are to be counted; all the rest *coming*. At one blast of the horn, the hounds are back to the point at which the scent has failed, Jack Stevens being in his place to turn them. "*Yo doit! Pastime,*" says the Squire, as she feathers her stern down the hedge-row, looking more beautiful than ever. She speaks! "Worth a thousand, by Jupiter!" cries John White, looking over his left shoulder, as he sends both spurs into Euxton, delighted to see only four more of the field are up. Our Snob, how-

* Mr. Osbaldeston sold Ashton to Lord Plymouth for four hundred guineas, after having ridden him six seasons.

ever, is amongst them. He has "gone a good one," and his countenance is expressive of delight, as he urges his horse to his speed to get again into a front place.

The pencil of a painter is now wanting; and unless the painter should be a sportsman, even his pencil would be worth little. What a country is before him!—what a panorama does it represent! Not a field of less than forty—some a hundred acres—and no more signs of the plough than in the wilds of Siberia. See the hounds in a body that might be covered by a damask table-cloth—every stern down, and every head up, for there is no need of stooping, the scent lying breast-high. But the crash!—the music!—how to describe these? Reader, there is no crash now, and not much music. It is the tinker that makes great noise over a little work; but at the pace these hounds are going there is no time for babbling. Perchance one hound in five may throw his tongue as he goes, to inform his comrades, as it were, that the villain is on before them, and most musically do the light notes of Vocal and Venus fall on the ear of those who may be within reach to catch them. But who is so fortunate in this second burst, nearly as terrible as the first? Our fancy supplies us again, and we think we could name them all. If we look to the left, nearly abreast of the pack, we see six men going gallantly, and quite as straight as the hounds themselves are going; and on the right are four more, riding equally well, though the former have rather the best of it, owing to having had the inside of the hounds at the

last two turns, which must be placed to the chapter of accidents. A short way in the rear, by no means too much so to enjoy this brilliant run, are the rest of the *élite* of the field, who had come up at the first check; and a few who, thanks to the goodness of their steeds, and their determination to be with the hounds, appear as if dropped from the clouds. Some, however, begin to show symptoms of distress. Two horses are seen loose in the distance—a report is flying about that one of the field is badly hurt, and something is heard of a collar-bone being broken, others say it is a leg; but the pace is *too good* to inquire. A cracking of rails is now heard, and one gentleman's horse is to be seen resting, nearly balanced, across one of them, his rider being on his back in the ditch, which is on the landing side. "Who is he?" says Lord Brudenel to Jack Stevens. "Can't tell, my lord; but I thought it was a queerish place when I came o'er it before him." It is evidently a case of peril, but the pace is *too good* to afford help.

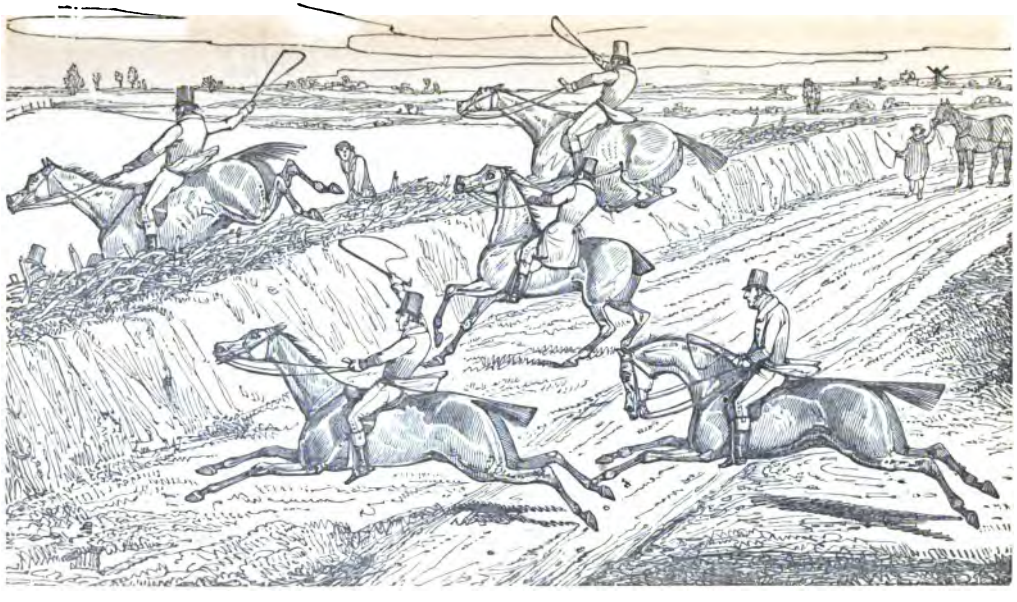
Up to this time, "Snob" has gone quite in the first flight; the "Dons" begin to eye him, and, when an opportunity offers, the question is asked—"Who is that fellow on the little bay horse?" "Don't know him," says Mr. *Little* Gilmour (a fourteen stone Scotchman, by-the-by), ganging gallantly to his hounds. —"He can ride," exclaims Lord Rancliffe. "A tip-top provincial, depend upon it," added Lord Plymouth, going quite at his ease on a thorough-bred nag, three stone above his weight, and in perfect racing trim. Animal nature, however, will cry "enough," how good

soever she may be, if unreasonable man press her beyond the point. The line of scent lies right athwart a large grass ground (as a field is termed in Leicestershire), somewhat on the ascent; abounding in ant-hills, or hillocks, peculiar to old grazing land, and thrown up by the plough, some hundred years since, into rather high ridges, with deep, holding furrows between each. The fence at the top is impracticable—Meltonicè, "a stopper;" nothing for it but a gate, leading into a broad green lane, high and strong, with deep slippery ground on each side of it. "Now for the timber-jumper," cries Osbaldeston, pleased to find himself upon Ashton. "For Heaven's sake, take care of my hounds, in case they may throw up in the lane." Snob is here in the best company, and that moment perhaps the happiest of his life; but, not satisfied with his situation, wishing to out-Herod Herod, and to have a fine story to tell when he gets home, he pushes to his speed on ground on which all regular Leicestershire men are careful, and the death-warrant of the little bay horse is signed. It is true he gets first to the gate, and has no idea of opening it; sees it contains five new and strong bars, that will neither bend nor break; has a great idea of a fall, but no idea of refusing; presses his hat firmly on his head, and gets his whip hand at liberty to give the good little nag a refresher; but all at once he perceives it will not do. When attempting to collect him for the effort, he finds his mouth dead and his neck stiff; fancies he hears something like a wheezing in his throat; and discovering quite unexpectedly that the

gate would open, wisely avoids a fall, which was *booked* had he attempted to leap it. He pulls up, then, at the gate; and as he places the hook of his whip under the latch, John White goes over it close to the hinge-post, and Captain Ross, upon Clinker, follows him. The Reviewer then walks through.

The scene now shifts. On the other side of the lane is a fence of this description: it is a newly plashed hedge, abounding in strong growers, as they are called, and a yawning ditch on the other side; but, as is peculiar to Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, a considerable portion of the blackthorn, left uncut, leans outwards from the hedge, somewhat about breast-high. This large fence is taken by all now with the hounds—some to the right and some to the left of the direct line; but the little bay horse would have no more of it. Snob puts him twice at it, and manfully too; but the wind is out of him, and he has no power to rise. Several scrambles, but only one fall, occur at this "rasper," all having nearly enough of the killing pace; and a mile and a half further, the second horses are fallen in with, just in the nick of time. A short check from the stain of sheep makes everything comfortable, and the Squire having hit off his fox like a workman, thirteen men, out of two hundred, are fresh mounted and with the hounds, which settle to the scent again at a truly killing pace.

"*Hold hard, Holyoake!*" exclaims Mr. Osbaldeston (now mounted on Clasher), knowing what double-quick time he would be marching to, with fresh pipes to play upon and the crowd well shaken off; "*pray* don't



"The little bay horse will have no more."

press 'em too hard, and we shall be sure to kill our fox.* *Have at him there,* Abigail and Fickle, good bitches!—see what a head they are carrying! I'll bet a thousand they kill him." The country appears better and better. "He's taking a capital line," exclaims Sir Harry Goodricke, as he points out to Sir James Musgrave two young Furrier hounds, who are particularly distinguishing themselves at the moment. "Worth a dozen Reform Bills," shouts Sir Francis Burdett, sitting erect upon Sampson,† and putting his head straight at a yawner. "We shall have the Whissendine brook," cries Mr. Maher, who knows every field in the country, "for he is making straight for Teigh." "And a bumper, too, after last night's rain," holloas Captain Berkeley, determined to get first to four stiff rails in a corner. "So much the better," says Lord Alvanley, "I like a bumper at all times." "A fig for the Whissendine," cries Lord Gardner; "I am on the best water-jumper in my stable."

The prophecy turns up. Having skirted Ranksborough gorse the villain has nowhere to stop short of Woodwell-head cover, which he is pointing for; and in ten minutes, or less, the brook appears in view. It is even with its banks, and, as

"Smooth glides the water where the brook is deep,"

its deepness was pretty certain to be fathomed.

* One peculiar excellence in Mr. Osbaldeston's hounds, was their steadiness under pressure by the crowd.

† A favourite hunter of the baronet's, which he once honoured by coming all the way from London to Melton to ride *one day* with hounds.

"*Yooi*, OVER he goes!" holloas the Squire, as he perceives Joker and Jewell plunging into the stream, and Red-rose shaking herself on the opposite bank. Seven men, out of thirteen, take it in their stride; three stop short, their horses refusing the first time, but come well over the second; and three find themselves in the middle of it. The gallant "Frank Forester" is among the latter: and having been requested that morning to wear a friend's new red coat, to take off the gloss and glare of the shop, he accomplishes the task to perfection in the bluish-black mud of the Whissendine, only then subsiding after a three days' flood.* "Who is that under his horse in the brook?" inquires that good sportsman and fine rider, Mr. Green, of Rolleston, whose noted old mare had just skimmed over the water like a swallow on a summer's evening. "It's Middleton Biddulph," says one. "Pardon me," cries Mr. Middleton Biddulph; "Middleton Biddulph is here, *and here he means to be!*" "Only Dick Christian,"† answers Lord Forester, "and it's nothing new to him." "But he'll be drowned," exclaims Lord Kinnaird. "I shouldn't wonder," observes Mr. William Coke. But the pace is *too good* to inquire.

The fox does his best to escape: he threads hedge-rows, tries the out-buildings of a farm house, and once turns so short as nearly to run his foil; but—the perfection of the thing—the hounds turn shorter

* A true story.

† A celebrated rough-rider at Melton-Mowbray, who greatly distinguished himself in the late grand steeple-chace from Rolleston. He is paid fifteen shillings per day for riding gentlemen's young horses with hounds.

"Seven out of thirteen take it in their stride; three stop short,—and three find themselves in the middle of it."

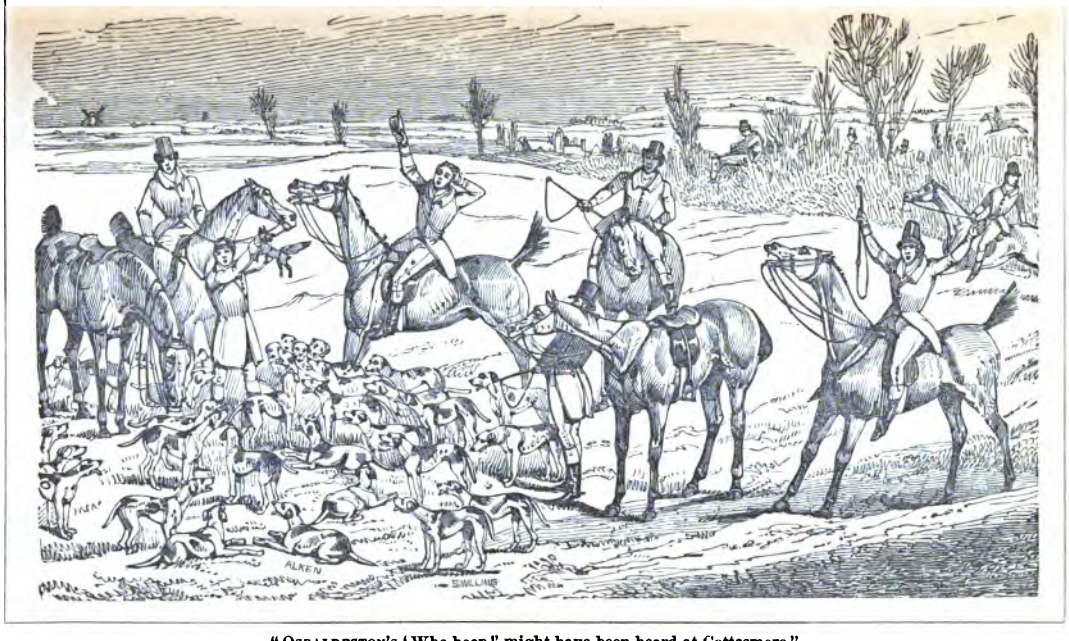
than he does, as much as to say—*die you shall.* The pace has been awful for the last twenty minutes. Three horses are blown to a stand-still, and few are going at their ease. "Out upon this great carcase of mine! no horse that was ever foaled can live under it at this pace, and over this country," says one of the best welter-weights, as he stands over his four-hundred-guinea chestnut, then rising from the ground after giving him a heavy fall—his tail nearly erect in the air, his nostrils violently distended, and his eye almost fixed.* "Not hurt, I hope," exclaims Mr. Maxse, to *somebody* whom he gets a glimpse of through the openings of a tall quickset-hedge which is between them, coming neck and croup into the adjoining field, from the top bar of a high, hog-backed stile. His eye might have been spared the unpleasing sight, had not his ear been attracted to a sort of *procumbit-humi-bos* sound of a horse falling to the ground on his back, the bone of his left hip indenting the greensward within two inches of his rider's thigh. It is young Peyton,† who, having missed his second horse at the check, had been going nearly half the way in distress; but from nerve and pluck, perhaps peculiar to Englishmen in the hunting field, but very peculiar to himself, got within three fields of the end of this

* The writer here alluded to that celebrated sportsman, as well as horseman, Mr. Thomas Edge, of Nottinghamshire, who some years back refused, from the late Lord Middleton, the enormous sum of two thousand two hundred pounds for two of his horses, and on another occasion fifty pounds for the loan of one of them during the first run of the day from a certain cover, whether short or long.

† The only son of Sir Henry Peyton, Bart., one of the best and hardest riders of the present day.

brilliant run. The fall was all but a certainty; for it was the third stiff timbered-fence that had unfortunately opposed him, after his horse's wind had been pumped out by the pace; but he was too good to refuse them, and his horse knew better than to do so.

The Æneid of Virgil ends with a death, and a chace is not complete without it. The fox dies within half a mile of Woodwell-head cover, evidently his point from the first, the pack pulling him down in the middle of a large grass field, every hound but one at his brush. Jack Stevens with him in his hands would be a subject worthy of Edwin Landseer himself: a blackthorn, which has laid hold of his cheek, has besmeared his upper garments with blood, and one side of his head and cap are cased in mud, by a fall hé has had in a lane, his horse having alighted in the ruts from a high flight of rails; but he has ridden the same horse throughout the run, and has handled him so well he could have gone two miles further, if the chace had been continued so long. Osbaldeston's "who-hoop" might have been heard at Cottesmore, had the wind set in that direction, and every man present is ecstatic with delight. "Quite the cream of the thing, I suppose," says Lord Gardner, a very promising young one, at this time fresh in Leicestershire. "The cream of everything in the shape of fox-hunting," observes that excellent sportsman Sir James Musgrave, looking at that moment at his watch. "Just ten miles, as the crow flies, in one hour and two minutes, with but two trifling checks, over the finest country in the world. *What superb hounds are these!*" added the Baronet, as



"OSBALDESTON'S 'Who-hoop!' might have been heard at Cottesmore."

the same place, and in the same time, when the field were nearly as much beaten as they were to-day."

But we have left Snob in the lane, who, after casting a longing eye towards his more fortunate companions, who were still keeping well in with the hounds, throws the rein over the neck of the good little bay horse, and, walking by his side, that he may recover his wind, inquires his way to Melton. Having no one to converse with, he thus soliloquises as he goes:—"What a dolt have I been, to spend five hundred a year on my stable, in any country than this! But stop a little: how is it that *I*, weighing but eleven stone four pounds with my saddle, and upon my best horse, an acknowledged good one in my own country, could neither go so fast nor so long as that heavy fellow Maxse: that still heavier Lord Alvanley; and that monster Tom Edge, who, they tell me, weighs eighteen stone, at least, in the scales?" At this moment a bridle-gate opens in the lane, and a gentleman in scarlet appears, with his countenance pale and wan, and expressive of severe pain. It is he who had been dug out of the ditch in which Jack Stevens had left him, his horse having fallen upon him, after being suspended on the rail, and broken three of his ribs. Feeling extremely unwell, he is glad to meet with Snob, who is going his road,—to Melton,—and who offers him all the assistance in his power. Snob also repeats to him his soliloquy, at least the sum and substance of it, on which the gentleman,—recovering a little from his faintness by the help of a glass of brandy and water at the village,—thus makes his

comment :—"I think, Sir, you are a stranger in this part of the world." "Certainly," replied Snob, "it is my first appearance in Leicestershire." "I observed you in the run," continued the wounded sportsman; "and very well you went up to the time I fell, but particularly so to the first check. You then rode to a leader, and made an excellent choice; but after that period, I saw you not only attempting a line of your own, but taking liberties with your horse, and anticipated the fate you have met with. If you remain with us long, you will be sure to find out that riding to hounds in Leicestershire is different from what it is in most other countries in England, and requires a little apprenticeship. There is much choice of ground; and if this choice be not judiciously made, and coupled with a cautious observance of pace, a horse is beaten in a very short time. If you doubt my creed, look to the events of this memorable day." Snob thanks him for his hints, and notes them in his book of memory.

The fame of Snob and his little bay horse reaches Melton before he walks in himself. "That provincial fellow did not go amiss to-day," says one. "Who was that rural-looking man on a neatish bay horse—all but his tail—who was so well with us at the first check?" asks another, who himself could not get to the end, although he went "a good one," three parts of the way. There is no one present to answer these questions; but the next day, and the next, Snob is in the field again, and again in a good place. Further inquiries are made, and satisfactory information

obtained. On the fourth day, a nod from one—a "how do you?" from another—"a fine morning," from a third—are tokens good-humouredly bestowed upon him by some of the leading men; and on the fifth day, after a capital half-hour, in which he has again distinguished himself, a noble *bon-vivant** thus addresses him—"Perhaps, Sir, you would like to dine with me to-day; I shall be happy to see you at seven."

"Covers," he writes next day to some friend in his remote western province, "were laid for eight, the favourite number of our late king; and, perhaps his majesty never sat down to a better-dressed dinner in his life. To my surprise, the subject of fox-hunting was named but once during the evening, and that was when an order was given that a servant might be sent to inquire after a gentleman who had had a severe fall that morning over some timber; and to ask, by the way, if Dick Christian came alive out of a ditch, in which he had been left, with a clever young thorough-bred one on the top of him." The writer proceeds to describe an evening in which wit and music were more thought of than wine—and presenting, in all respects, a perfect contrast to the old notions of a fox-hunting society:—but we have already trespassed on delicate ground.

It is this union of the elegant repose of life with the energetic sports of the field that constitutes the charm of Melton-Mowbray; and who can wonder that young gentlemen, united by profession, should

* The writer here alluded to Lord Alvanley.

be induced to devote a season or two to such a course of existence? We must not, however, leave the subject without expressing our regret that resorting, *year after year*, to this metropolis of the chace, should seem at all likely to become a *fashion* with persons whose hereditary possessions lie far from its allurements. It is all very well to go through the training of the acknowledged *school* of "the craft;" but the country gentleman who understands his duties, and in what the real permanent pleasure of life exists, will never settle down into a regular Meltonian. He will feel that his first concern is with his own proper district, and seek the recreations of the chace, if his taste for them outlives the first heyday of youth, among the scenes, however comparatively rude, in which his natural place has been appointed.

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